

# COMMITTED TO FLYING HIGH IN THE LOW-COST AIRLINE INDUSTRY? AN EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the linkages between motivation factors, job satisfaction and employee commitment in a low-cost airlines company. A quantitative approach was employed using a random survey questionnaire to collect data from low-cost airline ground staff. A total of 400 samples were received, and multiple regression with the stepwise method was used to perform a study on the relationship between variables. The results revealed that intrinsic motivation was positively related to job satisfaction, of which the most influencing factors were recognition, work itself, advancement and responsibility. Secondly, the extrinsic motivation factors (salary, technical supervision, working conditions, company policy and administration, and job security) were found to be related to job satisfaction. Furthermore, the study found that job satisfaction was related to employee commitment to work in a low-cost carrier company. The study suggested that the organization should focus on improving staff job satisfaction as it helps them to be committed to the airline organization. Several academic and managerial contributions are put forward, and future research is also recommended at the end of the paper.

**Keywords:** job motivation, job satisfaction, employee commitment, low-cost airline

## INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, Thailand has recorded strong growth in the aviation industry, especially for domestic flights with most of the airlines are dominated by Low-Cost Carrier (LCC) companies. Due to the increased competition in the airline business, the airline needs personnel with knowledge and job position ability, as well as being more skilled in other special areas. Hence, the struggle for human resources with knowledge and ability in the airline sector occurs. So, it has been affected by the resignations of employees, changing their jobs for a higher rate. These problems are most likely to

occur in the low-cost airline business because the employees tend to quit and work with full-service airlines that offer better working conditions.

Airlines should speed up resolving this problem by creating incentives for employees to perform well and efficiently to meet the standards of service that the airline has set. It also creates loyalty in the organization for employees, because employees who are truly committed to the organization will focus on the willingness to work to achieve organizational goals (Huse and Cummings, 1985). Likewise, human resources is an activity whose purpose is to allow employees to perform their job with satisfaction and achieve career goals. This is consistent with (Wong & Musa, 2014).

In academic terms, inclusive in the above introduction, the researcher has studied other research articles in the past that have researched human resource management in the aviation industry, and found that there are 7 groups of important studies, consisting of 1) Human resource development services; 2) Working behavior; 3) Welfare and benefits; 4) Workplace safety; 5) Quality of work-life; 6) Management and marketing; 7) Passenger satisfaction with the use of airlines. The group that has been studied and researched the most is Human Resource Management; by the following: Thomas and Strybel(2016); Patton (2015); Steven, Appelbaum and Fewster (2014); Helmreich, Ashleigh Merritt & Wilhelm (2009); Wilson (2005); De Menezes and Moniz (2008). The work that focused on satisfaction from staff services, including; Law (2017); Bhattacharjee (2016) Kampangseree (2014).

However, there is little research on the importance of employee motivation in the direct aviation industry. Hence, this study is aware of the importance of employee incentives that affect long-term work needs without frequent resignation problems. The study focuses on the low-cost airline business due to its work-oriented nature. Meaning one employee must be able to work on multiple duties at the same time, which will be a heavier operational workload than a fully-fledged airline with position-specific features (Steinheuer, 2015).

Based on the research gap, this study attempts to investigate the motivation factors that contribute to job satisfaction, and subsequently, employee commitment in the LCC companies. A greater understanding of the motivation factors is needed for the LCC companies to create a positive working environment that leads to the enhancement of employee retention. When the organization has developed a good attitude of service staff, it will result in good service quality; customers are satisfied with the service and return to use the service repeatedly (Jengjenkit, 2003). It can be said that good service comes from employees who are happy with the organization, and when the employees are happy and satisfied at work, it will result in an efficient and quality outcome. In the long run, the organization can maintain employees for a long time and does not cause frequent resignation rates (Steers et al., 1991).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Human resources, in general, are related to the building of morale for the employees. The research found that for a person with good work quality, one must start by finding a motivation that makes that employee satisfied at work and satisfied with the organization. This concept is in line with Fredrick Herzberg's two-factor theory, which

describes the motivation to create a quality of work-life, namely motivator factors or internal motivation that are directly related to work. Another one is hygiene factors or external motivation, which are components related to operations that are not an incentive but can make people satisfied or not satisfied with the work. If the employees have responded to the motivation, it will make them satisfied with the work.

Therefore, these factors can be defined as intrinsic motivation, referring to a person who has a desire to act or learn something with his or her heart and loves to seek. It is caused by the interest and willingness of a person who sees the value of activities that are done eagerly, and thus a feeling of wanting to work. Extrinsic motivation refers to the condition of a person being stimulated from the outside, in turn leading to behavioral expression of whether or not he/she is determined to work well during the trial period in order to get good results and hope for rewards. (Spindler, 1994)

As for personal needs, it is one motivation that comes from a person, in response to his influences, including his life, causing changes of unequal needs because the basic life of each person is different. Boyatzis (1982) said that the satisfaction of any person or thing that can be done is caused by personal motivation; a positive feeling or attitude towards work, and is positive, in which the happiness of the person arises from the operation and the satisfaction enabling people to become enthusiastic, happy and determined to work. So, job satisfaction refers to the positive feelings of employees who want to be happy in their work (TSantiwong, 1994).

From the discussion above, if the organization can create incentives for working for employees, it will make employees happy at work and satisfied with the work done. This will support employees' loyalty to the organization and is consistent with the research of Porter and Steers (1974), who found that employees who have a high commitment to the organization will have a strong desire to be with the employer and contribute to achieving the organization's goals. Having a high commitment to the organization will cause employees to reject the idea of resigning and support a strong tendency to stay with the organization for longer. So, employee commitment in this research refers to the commitment of individuals towards the organization. Loyalty involves the personal feelings of a person for the intention to work in an organization (Mowday, 1998). Based on the discussion above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Intrinsic motivation has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

H2: Extrinsic motivation has a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

H3: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with employee commitment.

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework for the current study.

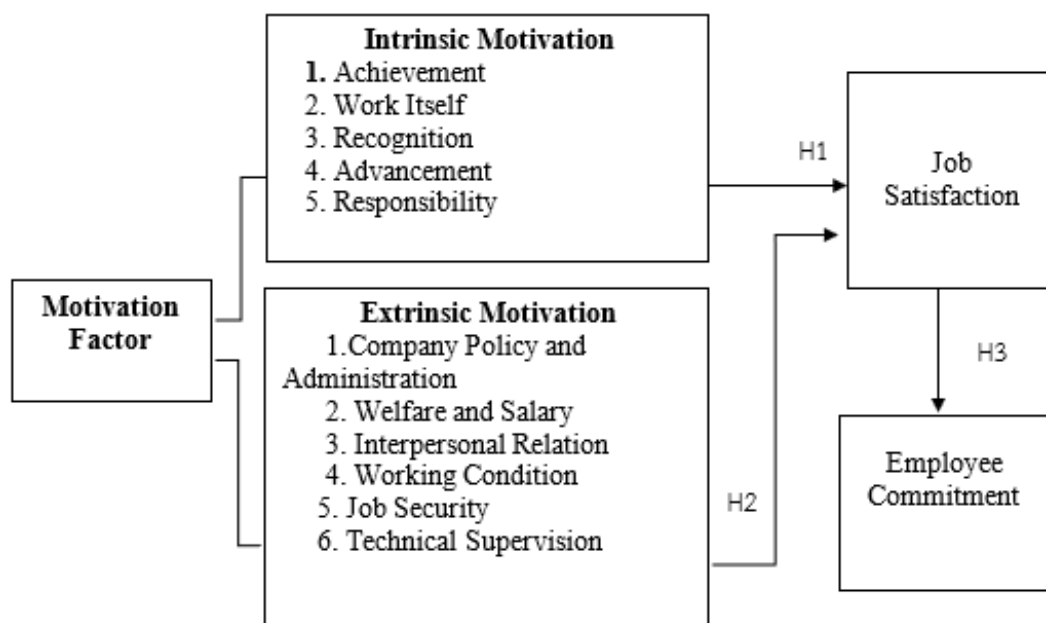


Figure 1. Research Framework

## METHOD

A quantitative approach was employed, and the population used in the study was the staff of the ground operations division of Thai Lion Air, whose attendance at different work schedules (Shift Work). Changing sleep time makes the system in the body change in health and mind (Folkard, 2003). Therefore, the researchers were interested in studying with employees working in shifts to measure stress and job satisfaction more clearly.

A total of 400 questionnaires were collected from the respondents. Descriptive statistics was used to find frequency and percentage of staff information, and for finding the mean of motivation perception. Inferential statistics were used to test the relationship between two variables, and multiple regression analysis was used to analyze what factors influence work satisfaction and commitment.

A 15-item instrument was used to measure intrinsic motivation factors that consist of 5 sub-variables. The variables include achievement, work, recognition, advancement, job responsibility that were adopted from Chotikaraso (2014), Senawong (2012), Ashton and Scott (2017), and Chotikaraso (2012). As for the extrinsic motivation, it was measured using 18-items which assessed the 6 sub-variables. Items for company policy and administration and working condition was borrowed from a study by Senawong (2012), while salary and interpersonal relation, job security, techniques supervision was adopted from Ashton (2017). All of the items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. A pretest was conducted in which the researchers checked the accuracy and

content validity of the questionnaire with three experts. This is to ensure the questionnaire is accurate and conform with the stated research objectives. Based on the experts' feedbacks, several improvements were made on the questionnaire.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The results of the study found that most of the respondents were female (59.5%), males (40.5%), with most aged between 26-35 years (66.5%), followed by ages between 18-25 years (17.8%) and ages 35-44 years (15.8%) having a smaller proportion respectively. The respondents had the most education level at the bachelor degree level (69.8%), below the bachelor's degree (27.8%), the smallest being those who have graduated with a Master's degree or higher are in the rate of only 2.5 percent (2.5%). Regarding the average income of Thai Lion Air employees: 15,001 - 20,000 baht (44.8%), followed by the average income level at 20,001 - 25,000 baht (39.3%). Next is the average income less than 15,000 baht (7%), the rest have average income levels of 25,001 - 30,000 baht (5.8%) and 30,001 - 35,000 baht (3.3%) respectively, and do not have average incomes of 35,001 baht or more. Moreover, the research found that more than 65.8% of Thai Lion Air employees have been working for at least 1-3 years and 4-6 years (26.3%) and people working less than 1 year (8%)

With regards to hypothesis 1, the study found that intrinsic motivation factors have a significant and positive relationship with intrinsic motivation. Recognition had the highest level of relationship with job satisfaction, 89%, followed by work itself which has a level of relationship to job satisfaction at 85%, with advancement which has a level of relationship to job satisfaction at 85%. There is a 77% relationship level of responsibility and job satisfaction. The lowest level of relationship is achievement and job satisfaction is 62%. Table 1 shows the correlation coefficient between intrinsic motivation factors with employee satisfaction.

**Table 1:** Correlation coefficient between intrinsic motivation factors and job satisfaction.

Intrinsic Motivation Factors	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Level of Satisfaction
1. Achievement	r	.624**
	p	.000
2. Work Itself	r	.851**
	p	.000
3. Recognition	r	.886**
	p	.000
4. Advancement	r	.844**
	p	.000
5. Responsibility	r	.770**
	p	.000

**Noted** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the results of Multiple Regression Analysis with Stepwise, the prediction coefficient ( $R^2$ ) is quite high at 0.864, indicating that Intrinsic motivation factors have a positive influence on job satisfaction up to 86%. If taken by each variable, then it is

found that only four variables have a positive influence on job satisfaction with statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), which can be described as acceptance variables. Recognition has the most positive influence, that is, when the number of recognition units increases by 1 unit it will result in employee satisfaction increasing to .444 units or approximately 44% ( $\beta = .444$ ,  $t = 12.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The second most influential variable is the work itself. In other words, when the number of work itself increases by 1, it results in job satisfaction of employees increasing by .347 units or about 35% ( $\beta = .347$ ,  $t = 7.842$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and includes job progress variables or advancement, also having a positive influence on job satisfaction, that is, when the number of units for advancement increases by 1 unit, it results in employee job satisfaction increasing by .324 units or About 32% ( $\beta = .324$ ,  $t = 9.718$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Job responsibilities (Responsibility) has the least influence on job satisfaction. If 1 unit of job responsibility increases, it increases employee satisfaction of 0.127 units, or approximately 13% ( $\beta = 0.127$ ,  $t = 3.128$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Durbin-Watson equals 1.896, which is between 1.5 and 2.5, indicating the free movement expectation. Table 2 shows the results of the Multiple Regression Analysis with Stepwise.

**Table 2:** Multiple regression analysis with stepwise method of the intrinsic motivation factor towards work satisfaction.

Intrinsic Motivation	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	R <sup>2</sup>
	B	Std.Error	$\beta$			
1. Recognition	2.096	0.170	0.444	12.313	0.000	0.864
2. Advancement	1.339	0.138	0.324	9.718	0.000	
3. Work Itself	1.694	0.216	0.347	7.842	0.000	
4. Responsibility	0.655	0.209	0.127	3.128	0.002	

**Noted** Dependent Variable: JBSAT ,  $F = 625.835^*$  , Durbin-Watson = 1.896

In terms of Hypothesis 2, it was found that extrinsic motivation has a relationship with job satisfaction with a statistical significance at the level of 0.01, welfare and salary having the highest level of relationship with job satisfaction 87%, followed by company policy and administration having a relationship level with job satisfaction at 86%. Relationships between colleagues (Interpersonal Relation) and supervising techniques have a level of relationship with job satisfaction at 85%. As for job security, it had a relationship level with job satisfaction at 84%, and the work environment had the lowest relationship level to work satisfaction 75%. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient between extrinsic motivation factors and job satisfaction.

**Table 3:** Correlation coefficient between extrinsic motivation factors and job satisfaction.

Extrinsic Motivation Factors	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Level of Satisfactions
1. Company Policy and Administration	r	.865**
	p	.000
2. Welfare and Salary	r	.871**
	p	.000
3. Interpersonal Relation	r	.848**
	p	.000

Extrinsic Motivation Factors	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Level of Satisfactions
4. Working Condition	r	.754**
	p	.000
5. Job Security	r	.836**
	p	.000
6. Technical Supervision	r	.848**
	p	.000

**Noted** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the Multiple Regression Analysis with Stepwise Method, the prediction coefficient ( $R^2$ ) is quite high at 0.860, indicating that external motivation factors have a positive influence on job satisfaction up to 86%. Specifically, it was found that five variables have a positive influence on job satisfaction with statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), which can be explained that welfare and salary have the highest positive influence, that is, when the number of salaries and compensation increases by 1 unit, it will result in satisfaction being increased by 313 units or approximately 31% ( $\beta = .313$ ,  $t = 7.303$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and includes working conditions, which also have a positive influence on Job satisfaction, That is, when the number of units in the work environment increases by 1 unit, it will result in employee satisfaction increasing by 214 units, or about 21% ( $\beta = .214$ ,  $t = 7.937$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The variable that has an effect on job satisfaction is Technical Supervision which has an indirect influence on the job satisfaction of the employees, that is, when the number of supervising techniques increases 1 unit it will result in an increase in the job satisfaction of employees, 229 units or approximately 23% ( $\beta = -.229$ ,  $t = 5.846$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Company policy and administration variables also have an indirect influence on job satisfaction. That means, when the number of company policy and administration units increases by 1 unit, it results in employee satisfaction increasing by 18% ( $\beta = -.178$ ,  $t = 3.799$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Remains confident in the job or job security have minimal influence on job satisfaction. If 1 unit of job security increases, it will result in job satisfaction of the employees increasing by .094 units or approximately 9% ( $\beta = .094$ ,  $t = 2.232$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Durbin-Watson value is 2.003, which is between 1.5 and 2.5, indicating independent expectation.

**Table 4:** Showing the multiple regression analysis with stepwise method of the extrinsic motivation factor toward job satisfaction.

Extrinsic Motivation Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	$R^2$
	B	Std.Error	$\beta$			
1. Welfare and Salary	1.446	0.198	0.313	7.303	0.000	0.860
2. Working Condition	0.932	0.117	0.214	7.937	0.000	
3. Technical Supervision	0.981	0.168	-0.229	5.846	0.000	
4. Company Policy and Administration	0.874	0.230	-0.178	3.799	0.000	



5. Job Security	0.354	0.158	0.094	2.232	0.026
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**Noted** Dependent Variable: JBSAT ,  $F = 485.272^*$  , Durbin-Watson = 2.003

Hypothesis 3 proposed the significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee commitment. The research found that job satisfaction is related to employee commitment, with a statistical significance at the level of 0.01, with overall job satisfaction having a relationship with employee commitment to be more than 71%. In the results of Multiple Regression Analysis with Stepwise Method, the prediction coefficient ( $R^2$ ) is quite high as 0.829, indicating that Job satisfaction has a positive influence on Employee commitment by 83%. Table 5 shows the correlation coefficient between job satisfaction and employee commitment.

**Table 5:** Correlation coefficient between job satisfaction and employee commitment.

Job Satisfaction	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Level of Employee commitment
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	r	.714**
	p	.000

**Noted** \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The analysis results in support and confirms that the factors of intrinsic motivation have a positive influence on job satisfaction, for example, the Recognition Factor had the most positive influence, indicating that most Thai Lion Air ground staff felt work acceptance from supervisors and colleagues. This may be because airlines working on the ground have to work as a team and therefore have to coordinate between teams. This is in line with the research of Chanphen (2014), conducting studies of organizational commitment of the staff of community organization development institutions, finding that officials have great opinions that the organization can be successful, but requires cooperation from many parties and teamwork. This results in giving the employees in the institution a feeling of being involved in the organization's goals together as a part of making the employees satisfied in their work.

The work itself has a positive influence on job satisfaction, showing that Thai Lion Air employees have fun and find their work challenging. Since the job at the airport is a service job, employees meet many people. If the employees are service-minded, then the employees will feel and enjoy the work. The groundworkers must have good skills in all-round knowledge, including immediate problem-solving skills. The responsibility is considered as one factor that affects job satisfaction. Corresponding to the research of Buaphong (2008), who studied the job satisfaction of flight directors, it was found that flight attendants are at a high level in their work. They like to feel that their work is difficult and requires learning. It requires experience combined with knowledge in many areas, and they must be able to handle problems and know how to handle working pressures.

Extrinsic motivation factors have a positive influence on job satisfaction. It was found that welfare and salaries have the strongest positive influence to show that ground staff at Thai Lion Air feel satisfied with their salary and benefits. This is because working in



the airline business receives high compensation because it requires knowledge of a variety of skills and unique skills. Moreover, business performance has grown, resulting in the ability to pay compensation to employees. Employees who work in the airline organization, therefore, look forward to receiving adequate and appropriate compensation. When employees are paid as targeted, it contributes to the employees' dedication, physical strength, and motivation to work and create satisfaction in work. Following the study of Inthaphong (2012) who studied morale in the performance of Thai Airways employees, it was found that sufficient and fair compensation for living in the current economic conditions is an important factor that causes employees to continue working with the organization.

Working conditions were found to have a significant positive influence on job satisfaction. Because airline employees have to work at an airport in which the workplace or office must be organized to be standardized and under the regulations of the airport, it makes the work of employees not difficult in the workplace because the airline has organized it orderly. Working in an airport is comfortable in all aspects, and has strict security, therefore, the working condition is the first element that the Lion Air staff are satisfied with, and therefore want to work every day. Which corresponds to the support factors in Herzberg's two-factor theory (1968), which states that the physical conditions of work such as light, color, sound, air, working hours, and including other environments such as equipment or tools quality and suitability affect the employee satisfaction and results in the employees working to their full capacity.

But even if the employees are satisfied with the salary and compensation received, it was found an indirect effect on the job satisfaction of the employees is that Technical Company Policy and Administration shows that the airline's management policy does not meet the needs of workers. Also, supervision between supervisors and subordinates still has points to be improved. As a result of the study on the intention to leave the staff, the research of Limyothin (2012) clearly states that adjusting the organization's human resources policy to have a higher standard of work or to adjust the family business management policy to be more international is advantageous.

Moreover, Thai Lion Air employees were found to have a low level of job security. From the data analysis, it was found that job security has the least influence on job satisfaction. Arguably, this is because most of the respondents are operational staff, which gives stability to an employee's working life. If the organization can create a sense of security for its employees, it will make them feel satisfied at work. It may result in commitment to the organization, as well as be in line with the supporting factors in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg's, 1959). Job security is about a person's feelings for the job and a sustainable feeling of career, including the sustainability of the organization.

It was found that employees are more likely to stay and work with an LCC company if they are satisfied with their work. Data analysis and hypothesis testing found that job satisfaction affected organizational commitment and intention to resign. It is based on the Two Factor Theory that found if a person is satisfied with their work and likes the work they are doing. They are also satisfied to work in the organization and will have a lower rate of resignation or change of work than those with low satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For this reason, the organization should focus on the importance of making employees satisfied in work and make personnel to remain with the organization as long as possible. Because an individual has worked with the

organization for a long time, it is more difficult to decide to leave the organization than those who have worked for a short time (Becker, 1960).

## **RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATION**

Future researchers should extend the study to examine factors that influence job satisfaction among flight attendants. The results of the study can be used as basic concepts in education and research on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. By using these concepts, the theories of work motivation that can be studied for the satisfaction of work are the internal motivation related to work and external work-related motivation. Besides, the components of work satisfaction that the researchers extracted are the variables, and the results of the study can be used as guidelines for those interested in studying about job satisfaction components that affect organizational commitment.

Suggestions for the relevant organization to be efficiency development. Hence, the study findings proposed that firstly in addition to the compensation in the form of wages, the organization should focus on the fairness of wages, the lives of all employees and their families. There should be a policy to look after and support the children's scholarships for employees, including when employees have important festivals, such as weddings, congratulations, or condolences if a family member dies, For such internal issues, airline staff is still lacking in many aspects of their work, resulting in a lower quality of work-life and job satisfaction, including corporate commitment, such as technical support.

Supervisors could increase the level of quality of working life in this field, and organizations should have a policy of creating relationships between employees and supervisors. Maybe a joint activity or a meeting to ask for opinions on problems that employees find at the workplace each month, with supervisors directing and listening to them to fully express the discuss various problems. Organizing social activities to allow employees to perform activities could benefit society together. To strengthen the sense of pride in being a part of an organization that benefits society makes employees feel valuable in themselves through the good image of the organization.

Regarding the management policy, most of the employees surveyed suggested that the organization should adjust the bonus and salary increase policies in all departments equally. In cases when employees have errors at work, airlines should have systematic checks for errors for employees to monitor and use them to improve their operations; in turn, building trust for employees. The study results can be used as a guideline to model human resource management in enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment to employees.

The results of this study can be used as a guideline for future research. Comparative studies between low-cost airlines and full-service airlines can be done by conducting a study with ground staff, which is a position with high work pressure and a frequent resignation rate. Information can be presented to the executives for integrating a solution to the resignation problem of the employees in the organization, or conducting research between job satisfaction related to the quality of work-life in the workplace. One element that influences organizational commitment may also be studied by conducting a quantitative research, collecting data from the opinions of employees and qualitative data from the human resources personnel of the organization to see the

direction of the current human resource management policy of the organization and compare with the needs of the staff, to extract guidelines to create operational satisfaction for employees.

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